



Kitts, S-A. (2018). Action and the Modern Self in Vicente García de la Huerta's Raquel. *Dieciocho*, 41(2), 229-250.  
<http://faculty.virginia.edu/dieciocho/41.2/4.Kitts.41.2.pdf>

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

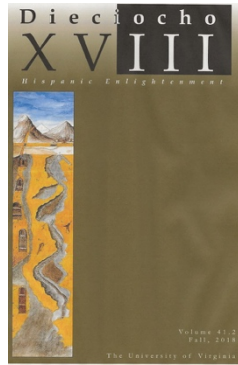
[Link to publication record in Explore Bristol Research](#)  
PDF-document

This is the final published version of the article (version of record). It first appeared online via the University of Virginia at <http://faculty.virginia.edu/dieciocho/> . Please refer to any applicable terms of use of the publisher.

## University of Bristol - Explore Bristol Research

### General rights

This document is made available in accordance with publisher policies. Please cite only the published version using the reference above. Full terms of use are available:  
<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/red/research-policy/pure/user-guides/ebr-terms/>



## ACTION AND THE MODERN SELF IN VICENTE GARCÍA DE LA HUERTA'S *RAQUEL*

SALLY-ANN KITTS  
University of Bristol

Vicente García de la Huerta's mid-eighteenth-century reworking of the legendary relationship between King Alfonso VIII of Castile and the beautiful Raquel, a woman of Jewish faith and ethnicity, is a play that reflects the hopes, tensions and contradictions of its period of composition. On the one hand, it expresses a sense of nostalgia for the myths and values of the perceived glorious past of the Reconquest, which, in turn, serve as metaphors for the contemporary socio-political concerns of its aristocratic author. On the other hand, it reveals an acute awareness of the significance and challenge of the present time and a desire for a future that sees individuals take responsibility for their own actions, a modern outlook and an emergence from immaturity that is described by Immanuel Kant in his 1784 essay "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?" as the defining characteristic of this new modern age across Europe. The present paper explores the extent to which *Raquel* can be seen as a work, to borrow from Michel Foucault's description of the significance of Kant's essay, 'located in a sense at the crossroads of critical reflection' (38). It argues that the play engages with the present, not only in the ways identified by critics relating to its multiple connections with the 'motín de Esquilache', but also on a more abstract level in terms of thinking about the self, personal identity and the role of the individual in society. Seeking to read this work not simply within a national framework of Spanish Enlightenment, as has largely been the case until now, but rather as the product of a transnational intellectual experience, it opens with an initial exploration of the relationship between Enlightenment, modernity and identity, using some of the theoretical ideas in particular of Kant and Foucault, but also informed by the work of Charles Taylor, Jerrold Siegel, Judith Butler and Stuart Hall. Using this theoretical framework, it investigates the ways in which identity was questioned in the play through focusing on the notion of action as the key to understanding this text as occupying a significant position in Spanish intellectual history. It will reveal what might be regarded as a rather surprising Foucauldian 'attitude of modernity' in its author Vicente García de la Huerta ("What is Enlightenment?" 38). Described by his biographer Juan A. Ríos Carratalá as

a man who was 'demasiado sujeto a la irreflexión que en su caso deriva de la xenofobia y un extremado conservadurismo ideológico', (cervantesvirtual) a close reading of his play suggests that he was in fact a complex thinker very much of his time, in whose work were able to coexist an extreme misogyny and racism at the same time as an acute appreciation and understanding of the implications of modern human agency.

Huerta's *Raquel* is a neoclassical tragedy in three acts that explores the relationship between King Alfonso VIII and his Jewish lover Raquel. Opening on a day of what should be celebration of the King's past military victories over the Moors, instead the crowd is riotous and the castle besieged. The cause is the King's neglect of his duties through his infatuation with Raquel, which has led to her domination over him and the Court, and the sidelining of the Castilian nobility. Three noblemen, Garcerán Manrique de Lara, Hernán García de Castro and Álvaro Fáñez, respond in different ways to the crisis. The first is a sycophant who, while recognizing the dangerous situation facing the King and the country, will continue to line his own pockets and support Raquel for as long as she remains the King's favorite. Hernán García, on the other hand, is a proud Castilian noble who, while he would die for his monarch, will also speak what he sees as the truth to him, and seeks to bring Alfonso to his senses. Álvaro Fáñez is impetuous and proud, and willing to act against Raquel even if this also goes against the express orders of his monarch. After an initial reaction that sees him reject Raquel and act with conviction to reestablish order in his kingdom, Alfonso is easily persuaded to take her back and, struggling between duty and love and seeing himself as a mere pawn of ill-fortune, he goes so far as to set her on the throne in his place while he leaves for a day's hunting. Raquel, poorly advised by her power-hungry Jewish advisor Rubén, further insults the Castilian nobles and, as the situation worsens, finds herself facing impending death at the hands of the baying crowd, whom she believes to have been spurred on by Hernán García. In fact he remains loyal to Alfonso and, in spite of his undisguised hatred of her, seeks to protect her from the imminent arrival of Álvaro Fáñez and his band of insurrect nobles. Raquel, however, fails to recognize Hernán García's loyalty and refuses to leave with him, leading to her being mortally wounded at the hands of Rubén, forced to stab her by Álvaro Fáñez in order to try and save his own skin. As Alfonso returns to find Raquel dying, she tells him of Rubén's actions and that Hernán García was the only loyal man. The King reacts violently, killing Rubén and is ready to take the offered lives of Álvaro Fáñez and his followers when Hernán García persuades him to recognize their just cause and temper his actions. The play ends with Alfonso's recognition that his own actions have led to Raquel's death and pardons his vassals for their offences.

Work by Spanish enlightenment scholars such as René Andioc, Philip Deacon and Juan Ríos Carratalá has given us persuasive evidence to support a reading of *Raquel* as using the medieval story of the supposed bewitching of a Castilian monarch by a non-Castilian, non-noble, non-Christian woman, as a metaphor reflecting the contemporary tensions between the native Spanish nobility and those Neapolitan and Sicilian individuals entrusted with the government of Spain in the early years of his reign by Charles III. They argue that Huerta is making an analogy between past and present and highlight the links between Huerta's play and the events of and following the 'motín de Esquilache' of March 1766. Although *Raquel* was not given its first performance in Madrid until 1778, it made its debut in Orán (Algeria) in 1772 and contemporary evidence dates its composition to 1766. Deacon offers proof that *Raquel* was circulating in manuscript form in 1766 and therefore likely to have been written in support of the claims of the traditional nobility of Spain which were articulated in pamphlets at the time. Even if supporting evidence weren't available, as Andioc says, the likelihood that *Raquel* was written in direct response to the events of 1766 can be found in 'la correspondencia casi total que ofrecen las ideas políticas expresadas por los ricoshombres toledanos de la tragedia con las que profesan las proclamas y pasquines sediciosos de Madrid durante los sucesos de marzo de 66' (259). They note that the characters in Huerta's *Raquel* are drawn along ideological lines that reflect key aspects of class and ethnic identity and for which evident parallels exist in eighteenth-century Spain at that time. According to these readings, the most important figure in the play is not so much its eponymous protagonist, nor indeed the King, Alfonso, as the nobleman Hernán García. The play charts the triumph of his understanding of the nature of monarchy and the intimate relation between the monarch and the nobility, as Andioc says, 'una idea de carácter claramente aristocrático y antiabsolutista' (261). In fact, Andioc argues that the full meaning of the play cannot be understood without seeing its intimate relation with the ideological and political context of the 1760s, in other words, that it is linked to specific events and to a specific political conception of Spain that is articulated through concepts of class and ethnic identity.

I agree with Andioc's argument about the importance of understanding the ideological and political context of the play, and in this paper seek to extend that contextualization to include an understanding of the intellectual and philosophical context of its time, that is to say of its characteristics as a work that engages with key aspects of early modernity and the Enlightenment. These two descriptors, 'modernity' and 'Enlightenment', relate intimately to each other and the nature of this connection has been explored by many. In his seminal work of 1932, Ernst Cassirer explained that

his text, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, was precisely an interpretation of the connection between the two:

It places the philosophy of the Enlightenment against the background of another and broader historical and philosophical theme [... It] is not self-contained, but looks before and after, beyond its own confines. It forms but a part and a special phase of that whole intellectual development through which modern philosophic thought gained its characteristic self-confidence and self-consciousness. (v-vi)

I am using the terms in this context, thinking about the Enlightenment as a time when new forms of self-aware intellectual activity took place that can be understood as essentially modern. It is also important to recognize, in this context, the difference between fundamental changes in how people came to understand the nature of existence and their place in the world, and how they then translated this altered intellectual outlook into social and political activity. James Schmidt's 2011 discussion of the misunderstandings that surround interpretations of Kant's response to the question 'What is Enlightenment?' is helpful in this context. He seeks to understand 'the differences between the ways in which we see the Enlightenment and the way it appeared to those who we take to be participants in it' and distinguishes 'between "philosophical" and "political" interpretations of the Enlightenment' (44). In this context, early modernity and the Enlightenment are seen as contiguous. However, modern enlightened thinking in philosophical terms does not necessarily translate into modern enlightened political thinking, in terms of what Israel refers to as 'an abstract package of basic values – toleration, personal freedom, democracy, equality racial and sexual, freedom of expression, sexual emancipation, and the universal right to knowledge and 'enlightenment' (11). It is perhaps in part to this difference that Kant is referring when he writes, 'If it is now asked, "Do we presently live in an *enlightened age*?" the answer is, "No," but we do live in an *age of enlightenment*' (123).

This difference is particularly important when we seek to understand the Spanish Enlightenment given that, as recently as 2015, it was still important for Jesús Astigarraga to preface his volume in the Oxford University Studies in the Enlightenment series with the statement that, '[t]raditional historiography has tended to disregard and even deny Spain's role in the Enlightenment, banishing the country to a benighted geographical periphery' (v). His collection of essays aims 'to emphasise the relevance of intellectual history in combating some of the main topics that profess the absence or the weakness of the Enlightenment in Spain' (265) and seeks to address directly

what Elisa Martí-López has referred to as an othering and orientalization of Spain, whereby it has been ‘perceived and constructed by the bourgeois “northern Europe”’ from the seventeenth century onwards, as a place of ‘geographic, political, and cultural eccentricity’ (45). My paper engages with this aim and approach, and argues that we can usefully shift the lens through which we explore the past and focus, not on what we might see as overtly radical, enlightened, social and political outcomes, but rather on the ways in which a philosophical attitude of modernity can be found to be present in the writings of Spanish eighteenth-century texts. By doing this we can reveal new evidence of the transnational nature of the Enlightenment and come to understand better both the experience of Spanish participants and the challenges that they faced.

Research on the concept of the self by Taylor and Siegel has identified a paradigmatic shift in thought about the self that can be traced back to the work of Montaigne and Descartes and establishes them as the ‘founder[s] of modern individualism’ (Taylor 182). Taylor describes Montaigne as inaugurating ‘the search for the self in order to come to terms with oneself’ as ‘one of the fundamental themes of our modern culture’ (183). Siegel argues that Descartes ‘postulated self-existence in a single dimension [...] making the self’s essential being arise out of its ability to reflect on its own existence’ (8), resulting in what Taylor describes as ‘a new model of rational mastery’ (149). The work of both critics reveals how the writings of Montaigne and Descartes established a new relationship between knowledge and control that led to a fundamental change in how we as human beings came to understand ourselves and, intimately connected to that, our place in, connections to, and impact on the world.<sup>1</sup> So it is, Taylor argues, that ‘by the turn of the eighteenth century, something recognizably like the modern self is in process of constitution, at least amongst the social and spiritual elites of northwestern Europe and its American offshoots’ (185). He describes this modern self as having three facets: ‘self-exploration’, ‘self-control’ and ‘the individualism of personal commitment’ which come together to reveal the creative possibilities of the modern self and its capacity for self-awareness and agency (185). They form the intellectual basis of Kant’s well-known response to the question, ‘What is Enlightenment?’ in which he famously describes

---

<sup>1</sup> Hassan Melehy, *Writing Cogito: Montaigne, Descartes, and the institution of the modern subject* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997) reveals the intimate connections between the work of the two, arguing persuasively that Descartes’s ideas on the self need to be read in the context of, and indeed, often as a response to the problems raised in the writings of Montaigne.

Enlightenment as 'man's emergence from his self-imposed immaturity':

Immaturity is the inability to use one's understanding without guidance from another. This immaturity is *self-imposed* when its cause lies not in lack of understanding but in lack of resolve and courage to use it without guidance from another. *Sapere Aude!* "Have courage to use your own understanding!" – that is the motto of enlightenment. (121)

Kant was capturing the essence of the era in which he lived in terms of a concept of personal maturity, of the emergence of men and women from an intellectual and moral childhood where, for a variety of reasons more to do with laziness, cowardice, complacency, and fear, than simply a lack of freedom, people had remained under 'the shackles of a permanent immaturity' that had kept them from 'a rational appreciation for both their own worth and for each person's calling to think for himself' (121). This idea of the rational autonomous will is a concept that he went on to explore in more detail in the *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785) where he established clear links between the rational autonomy he describes in 'What is Enlightenment?' and the notion of the categorical imperative that is at the heart of his deontological ethics.<sup>2</sup>

Taylor identifies specific links between Kant's views and a sense of dignity and self-control that he traces directly back to Descartes:

If rational control is a matter of mind dominating a disenchanted world of matter, then the sense of the superiority of the good life, and the inspiration to attain it, must come from the agent's sense of his own dignity as a rational being. [...] Descartes has placed the notions of dignity and esteem at the heart of his moral vision. (152 and 155)

From this sense of dignity, and the concept of control that accompanies it, comes a sense of the importance of action and the ability that we all have to construct ourselves and our own lives and therefore our own identities. As well as an ontological and epistemological theory, Descartes' is also an ethical theory in that it makes clear that, once the abstract realm of order has gone,

---

<sup>2</sup> As Allen W. Wood notes, 'Kant's basic idea is that our primary commitment should be to directing our own lives according to our own best rational judgment, and he accordingly reconceived the principle of morality itself as a principle of *rational autonomy*.' "What is Kantian Ethics?" In Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*. Edited and translated by Allen W. Wood. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002: 157-181 (159).

the only thing the individual has left is the ‘free disposition’ of his or her will and the decision to use it well or badly (Descartes 401). As Taylor writes,

We could say that rationality is no longer defined substantively, in terms of the order of being, but rather procedurally, in terms of the standard by which we construct orders in science and life. [...] What one finds running through all the aspects of this constellation [...] is the growing ideal of a human agent who is able to remake himself by methodical and disciplined action. (159)

In 1984, Foucault addresses this same question of ‘What is Enlightenment?’ and highlights the significance of the Kant’s text as capturing the sense of his own time as fundamentally different from the past, as modern:

[T]his little text is located in a sense at the crossroads of critical reflection and reflection on history. It is a reflection by Kant on the contemporary status of his own enterprise [...], a reflection on history and a particular analysis of the specific moment at which he is writing and because of which he is writing, [...] a point of departure: the outline of what one might call the attitude of modernity. (3)<sup>3</sup>

Like Taylor with regard to Descartes’ thinking a century earlier, Foucault highlights how Kant captures the agentic qualities of this fundamental change in the conception of the self as he explains the meaning of this ‘attitude of modernity’:

And by “attitude,” I mean a mode of relating to contemporary reality; a voluntary choice made by certain people; in the end, a way of thinking and feeling; a way, too, of acting and behaving that at one and the same time marks a relation of belonging and presents itself as a task. (39)

Foucault’s reading of Kant’s text captures the complex ontological and ethical essence of modernity as a call to action, with all the attendant

---

<sup>3</sup> James Schmidt. ‘On Foucault’s Review of Cassirer’s *Philosophy of the Enlightenment*’. Persistent Enlightenment blog, entry for 2 July 2013, <https://persistentenlightenment.com/2013/07/02/foucaultcassirer/> (accessed 1 November 2017), writes of the importance of this text, together with Foucault’s review of the 1966 French translation of Cassirer’s seminal work, for questioning the validity of widely-held assumptions that Foucault was an out-and-out critic and enemy of the Enlightenment.



possibilities and responsibilities that this brings and, in turn, brings out the extent to which it reveals Kant's sense of living in a fundamentally different time to that which has gone before. The challenge, then, for the new self-aware men and women of the Enlightenment who find themselves at this 'crossroads of critical reflection' is for them to find the 'resolve and courage' to take control of and responsibility for their own actions.

In highlighting the resilience of the individual to create his or her own world and, in particular, the moral and ontological imperative of the individual to engage actively with that world, the ideas expressed by Kant and Foucault about the modern self, in their respective engagements with the question of 'What is Enlightenment?', provide a suggestive theoretical framework, a lens through which to approach eighteenth-century texts so as to understand better the relationship between the author and the intellectual context of his or her period. When employed in relation to Spanish authors of the eighteenth century, as I am about to do with Huerta's *Raquel*, it demonstrates that modern thinking was not the preserve of Taylor's 'social and spiritual elites of northwestern Europe and its American offshoots' (185) and allows us to continue to challenge and reject the othering of Spain. It reveals that the key notion of choosing to engage actively with the present is a concept that is at the heart of Huerta's play not just politically, as demonstrated by Andioc and others in revealing Huerta's involvement with the 'motín de Esquilache', but also intellectually, ontologically and ethically.

An exploration of the character of King Alfonso VIII reveals how, as the play progresses, the King appears to come to understand the significance and challenge of the present time in terms of the need to take responsibility for his own actions. While on one level we can see him as engaged in a battle between reason and the passions typical of a number of male protagonists of Spanish neoclassical dramas, there is arguably much more at stake for Alfonso than simply learning to use rational thought to control and overcome his desires and emotions. He is a man who is also located at a crossroads in his own life, a moment of existential and constitutional crisis as he finds himself facing a popular uprising on the very day that he should be being celebrated as a national hero, the seventh anniversary of his success at the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa, described in the *Primera crónica general* as a decisive turning point in the reconquest of Iberia from the Moors (Menéndez Pidal 693). The King is faced with the task of deciding whether to remain at the whim of what he feels to be the arbitrary forces of luck, fate and fortune, giving free rein to his desires but thereby also risking his position as monarch, under threat from the ever-present unruly mob outside the palace, or whether he can find the Kantian 'resolve and courage' of the modern, enlightened

man to take responsibility for his own actions and use his reason to face up to the task before him.

In fact, as we shall see when we explore the text in more detail, not only is Alfonso's political position as King at stake in this play, but his social identity as a man. It could be argued that this is due to his failure hitherto to grasp not only the necessity for decisive action and the taking of responsibility but also the fundamentally iterative and performative nature of identity, as we have come to understand it from the work of Butler, and rely instead on an essentialist, pre-modern notion based on his male birthright as King.<sup>4</sup> The link that Hall establishes between identity and representation is also a very pertinent one when it comes to considering the character of Alfonso in Huerta's *Raquel*. For Hall, identity is intimately linked to representation, 'the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture [... involving] the use of language, of signs and images which stand for or present things' ('The Work of Representation' 15). The process of representation is performative, constructivist and open ended, 'a source for the production of social knowledge – a more open system, connected in more intimate ways with social practices and questions of power' (42). This entails that meaning is constantly changing and cannot be fixed, rather it is something that is fluid and constantly in play. Hall describes 'identification as a construction, a process never completed – always "in process"'. It is not determined in the sense that it can always be "won" or "lost", sustained or abandoned' ("Introduction" 2). In this view, the self is understood as being in constant creation and development as a result of our actions and interactions with others: it is 'a public phenomenon, a performance or construction that is interpreted by other people' (Benwell and Stokoe, 4). In the opening scenes of the play, we are presented not with the actual figure of Alfonso but rather with a description of him that builds up a very particular depiction of him as a King that will then contrast strongly with the actual character when he enters onto the stage a few moments later. The key concept here is action and the opening scene establishes a clear dichotomy between past and present in terms of Alfonso's behavior. It also

---

<sup>4</sup> Butler's exploration of the iterative and performative nature of gender identity in *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 1990) and elsewhere, highlights the intimate links between the self, identity, actions and behaviors: 'performativity is the vehicle through which ontological effects are established. Performativity is the discursive mode by which ontological effects are installed'. Peter Osborne, "Gender as performance: An interview with Judith Butler." *Radical Philosophy* 67 (Summer 1994): 32-39 (33).

introduces us to the exemplary character of Hernán García who, in a similar way to how he has been understood by Andioc as representing the ideological position of Huerta, also exemplifies the intellectual significance of the work, presenting the audience with an example of the modern, enlightened man in terms of his understanding of the performative nature of identity, the role that disciplined action plays in self-creation and representation, and his active engagement with the present and the future.

'Jornada primera' opens with the scene set in the Throne room of the *Alcázar* of Toledo, a symbolic setting that places one of the central issues of the play – the question of power and who has it – at the heart of the stage. Garcerán Manrique and Hernán García come on to the stage and the opening speech by Garcerán establishes the specifics of the date – exactly 10 years since Alfonso VIII's glorious return from military success in the Crusades and exactly 7 years since his similar defeat of the moors in the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa (1212), giving us a date for the play's action of 1219. Garcerán's description of the King initially establishes his identity as 'marte de Castilla' (l. 20), a proud leader who fought successful campaigns in both Spain and Palestine, and presents him in terms of an idealized masculinity as the brave Christian warrior accomplishing acts of heroism and seeking to establish and confirm a powerful Castilian national identity at home and abroad.<sup>5</sup> This opening speech presenting in positive terms the past actions and performed identity of the King is, however, then immediately contrasted with the very different picture Hernán García paints of the King at the present time as an individual whose reign is characterized by 'indolencia', 'subversión', 'desorden' and 'abandono' (ll. 39-41). The past glories have been 'borradas' and 'oscurecidas' (ll. 37-8) by the King's present actions – or rather lack of them as he is described as completely distracted from his duties by the presence of his mistress Raquel. Indeed, his relationship to Raquel is described as 'esclavitud ignominiosa' (l. 60) and it is apparent from this speech that, in contrast to the ideals of aggressive masculinity previously enacted by Alfonso, his behavior at the time the play is set falls far short of that seen as appropriate to the Castilian male. Far from being an exemplum of the gender, characterized by Yarbrow-Bejerano as 'the equation of masculinity with aggressivity, honor, national identity, and "pure" or noble blood' (8), Alfonso is represented to us by Hernán García and Garcerán

---

<sup>5</sup> All quotations from the play are taken from Vicente García de la Huerta, *Raquel* Edited with an introduction by René Andioc. Madrid: Castalia, 1970. Line numbers are given for quotations from the text and page number for quotations from the stage directions.

Manrique as having allowed himself to become warped by inaction and submission to the will of a woman. This behavior is seen as emasculating him, hiding or even obliterating his 'natural' male characteristics as previously demonstrated by his actions.

What we witness as the play progresses is how Alfonso comes to understand the significance and challenge of the present time in terms of the need to take responsibility for his own actions. The role of action is quickly established as a crucial factor: not only are the King's past and present actions contrasted but Garcerán Manrique and Hernán García debate the significance of actions both to their roles as nobles and to the continued reign of the king, in their exchange of views about the relationship between a King and his nobles. Garcerán's view is one of complete subservience and sycophancy: 'Los leales jámas acciones de su Rey critican' (ll. 73-4). Hernán's position, on the other hand, is more measured and is captured in his view that 'un Rey con sus acciones mayor cuenta debe tener' (ll. 89-90), expressing the view that when his actions fail to live up to the required expectation of his identity as King, 'lealtad será advertirle no osadía' (l. 86). A third view expressed later in the play is that of Álgar Fánéz, who on hearing rumors about Hernán's apparent treason in inciting the crowd to take action against Raquel, foregrounds Hernán's noble identity as the basis for rejecting such claims until proven with evidence: 'Yo de un noble jamás alevosías me persuado, y el crédito suspendo en caso igual a la evidencia misma' (ll. 416-8). He tends to the other extreme of being willing to carry out serious actions without any hesitation or forethought, responding to Hernán's denouncement of Raquel's later ascension to the throne, with 'A cuanto quieras, ya me determino' (l. 780), 'Cuanto pienses y digas, te confirmo' (l. 782) and 'A cuanto dispusieres me resuelvo' (l. 787). The key to the difference between these three nobles lies in their approach to action and the extent to which it is governed by reason and mature, responsible decision-making. These opening speeches indicate that the King will be judged by all of his actions and foreground the idea that he can live neither through a reliance on the past nor by a set and unquestioning notion of Kingship which is divorced from actions. Rather, that being a King, like any other aspect of an individual's identity, is a constant process of re-creation and representation. By failing to act like a King, Garcerán tells us that 'Alfonso hacia su perdición se precipita' (ll. 117-8) and we will see in his later speeches that this is indeed the case since what Alfonso is risking is not only his position as King but also his very sense of self and his act of living, as he is drawn towards thoughts of suicide.

With the arrival onto the stage of Raquel, Hernán elaborates on the theme of actions and how identity is expressed through them. He compares

the King's identity as a military hero, established through the performance of an idealized, aggressive masculinity during the previous conflicts, with that of his current involvement in 'guerras de amor' that have seen him behave as a weak-willed lover, enslaved by the deceptive beauty of the Jewish woman, Raquel. Hernán describes Raquel as a completely vice-ridden individual and insults her in every possible way, calling her a 'ramera vil' (l. 62) and an 'intruso poder' (l. 41) whose domination of the King (she has him in 'vil cadena' l. 53) has led to, 'el trastorno del público gobierno, nuestra deshonra, el lujo, la avaricia, y todo vicio en fin, que todo vicio en la torpe Raquel se encierra y cifra' (ll. 43-6). She is likened to the mythical snake, the basilisk, which reference also conjures up the role of the snake in deceiving Eve in the Biblical Garden of Eden thereby setting mankind on its path of sin. Hernán identifies Raquel as representing everything that is fearful and negative about women, within a traditional misogynistic conception of woman as the fount of all evil. In the single word 'judía' Raquel's identity is established in negative terms in all aspects, in terms of her gender, her ethnicity, her religion and her lack of noble birth.<sup>6</sup> Insulted in turn by Raquel for his speech, Hernán again confirms the significance of actions in establishing his identity as a truly loyal subject: 'Los vasallos [que] como yo su lealtad confirman con tantas pruebas' (ll. 175-7). When a few lines later Rubén says to Raquel that 'Alfonso cuanto pides te concede: su corazón, su Cetro y Monarquía riges a tu albedrío' (ll. 243-5), the established expectations of the audience regarding Alfonso's first actual appearance are that they will see on stage a weak man who is completely dominated by his mistress, a shadow of his former self, a man of inaction with no sense of duty or responsibility.

The contrast between this representation of Alfonso and his first appearance could hardly, then, be greater. His first words are decisive in their call for action: 'Aplíquese al desorden el remedio, Álvar Fáñez, si da lugar la ira al discurso' (ll. 265-7). His anger at affronts to his position in terms of the popular uprising leads him to reject Raquel's advances and denounce the petitions of the riotous crowd as seditious and disrespectful to his position, based on his previous military actions and his divine right as King. A few lines later, in his second appearance, still inflamed with anger, he accuses

---

<sup>6</sup> Although not possible within the confines of this paper, the character of Raquel also offers a lot of potential for further exploration within the context of modern subjectivity. For a thoughtful reading of the play that explores Raquel in terms of religious, ethnic and gender ideas, see Adam Lifshy, "'Esa beldad muerta': la judía arquétípica en la *Raquel* de Vicente García de la Huerta." *ALEPH* 11 (1996): 66-84.

Hernán of treason and the latter again defends himself with reference to his actions ('te olvidas de mi fe y lealtad, que bien debieras tener con tantas pruebas conocidas' ll. 434-6). In one of the most important speeches of the play from the ideological perspective argued by Andioc and others, Hernán sets out the concerns of the King's 'vasallos' and berates Alfonso for having abandoned his people to the tyranny of a foreigner, an act that in Hernán's view has cost him his identity as both a King and a military hero:

Ya no conquista Alfonso; ya no vence; ya no es Alfonso Rey. [...] ¿Para esto al noble esfuerzo de tu brazo venciste Reyes, conquistaste Imperios? [...] ¿Qué importa, Alfonso, que en tus tiernos años llenases con tu nombre todo el orbe, si es ignominia ya lo que fue aplauso? (ll. 521-2; 530-1; 540-2)

It is a speech that is equally important in intellectual terms since it highlights the notion that identity is not something that remains fixed and unchanging but rather is in constant flux and recreated through our actions. Hernán's own deeds exemplify this position as he ends his remonstrative speech offering his life to Alfonso if he doubts his loyalty. Alfonso is moved himself to action, raising up the kneeling Hernán and agreeing to banish Raquel forthwith from his kingdom. A series of self-questions about his personal, socio-political and gender identity as a human being, a King and a male warrior suggest that he appears to have realized the danger he has posed to his identity and sense of self through his inaction – '¿Soy yo Alfonso? ¿Soy Rey? ¿Soy de Castilla el invicto caudillo, y quien la ha dado tantas victorias?' (ll. 583-8), ¿No se ha olvidado Alfonso de sí mismo? (l. 635) ¿Pero no soy Alfonso? (l. 641). He goes on to recognize, through an oft-used eighteenth-century metaphor of the coming of light, the need for self-control and the domination of his passions by reason: 'Ya mi error conozco; ya advierto mi pasión, veo mi engaño, y ya, oh divina luz, con tus reflejos todo el horror descubro de este encanto. [...] Triunfe esta vez de sí, quien tantas veces supo triunfar de ejércitos contrarios, y añada a sus vasallos esta prueba del amor que les tiene Alfonso Octavo.' (ll. 605-8).

Yet there are clues in these two scenes to indicate that what we see is but another representation, with Alfonso presenting himself as the decisive leader but without the necessary acceptance of the responsibility that a real and lasting emergence from immaturity requires. This is apparent in his final words to Raquel which reveal a man who speaks not in terms of his own liability but rather sees only the workings of misfortune: 'aquesto es ser Alfonso desdichado, y Raquel la ocasión de sus desdichas'. (ll. 305-6). This reference to ill-fortune provides a clue to what we will soon see is a key aspect of his personality – his reliance on fate or chance and failure to take personal

responsibility for his actions. His response to Hernán quoted above—in which he seems to have recognized both the compromise he has caused to his own identity and his previous errors, shaken off his inaction, and espoused the enlightened ideal of allowing his reason to triumph over his passions—is in fact predicated on the role in this of the ‘cielo santo’ (l.574). Rather like Calderón’s King Basilio in *La vida es sueño*, Alfonso places too much reliance on the role of fate and too little on the power of free will, personal responsibility and personal actions. This reliance is confirmed in his soliloquy that follows just a few moments later which begins ‘Tiranos astros, ¿dónde llega el rigor de vuestro influjo?’ (ll. 620-1) and a few lines on decries ‘¡Oh suerte rigurosa! (l. 639) and then continues as, full of emotion, he explains his decision to Raquel as the result of ‘El rigor del hado’ (l. 678), condemning the ‘¡Suerte enemiga, a qué ocasión tan fuerte me has guiado! (l. 713-4).

Alfonso in the second *jornada* continues to be presented as someone in whom inaction reigns and robs him of his identity as monarch, and, given his submission to Raquel, also as a man, within the dominant ideal definition of masculinity. He continues to blame misfortune and ill-fate for his woes instead of taking responsibility for his actions himself, as he speaks of the ‘¡[...] suerte miserable de los Reyes, [...]!’ (l. 277); ‘duros astros’ (l. 431); ‘sacros cielos’ (l. 529); ‘el hado impío’ (l. 542); ‘mi desventura’ (l. 613). We see Alfonso’s thought processes at work in several long speeches to Garcerán where he debates the role of action in establishing identity: ‘¿Pues qué sirve el poder en los Monarcas, si siempre el Rey en sus acciones queda sujeto a la censura del vasallo, que injusto las abona o las reprueba?’ (ll. 285-8) And it becomes clear that it is not just his identity as King that is at stake in this second act but Alfonso’s very existence and sense of self as he is filled with thoughts of suicide at the loss of Raquel: ‘Garcerán, si el amor que me has debido quieres pagar, [...] [c]on tu acero abre este pecho, rómpeme las venas; mi espíritu desata de estos lazos; dame, dame la muerte’ (ll. 355-60), repeated again a few speeches later, ‘oh dolor: dame la muerte, serás piadoso aquesta vez siquiera’ (ll. 399-400). When confronted by Raquel, she has to hold him back from falling on his own sword (stage directions: ‘En ademán de echarse sobre la espada’ p. 126) Psychiatrist Wolfgang Rutz writes of the strong impact of gender-specific motivations on suicidal men ‘in countries and times of transition’, of ‘the loss of identity, the helplessness and the loss of social cohesion which have such a strong impact on [suicidal] males’ (162). We can see all three of these aspects in Alfonso; his loss of identity is visible through his rhetorical questioning; his sense of helplessness in the face of what he perceives to be the random acts of misfortune and ill-fate over which he has no control; and the disintegration of the social world that he has previously

seen as stable and ordered, as he faces the rebellion of the masses outside the palace and the rumblings of the Castilian noblemen inside.

Raquel's persuasive speeches in this scene lead the confused and desperate Alfonso to a change of heart. He cancels her banishment, choosing instead a route of inaction in the face of the perils to his kingship and indeed, as he previously recognized, Raquel's own life ('tu vida aguardo' l. 702; 'cuanto más, Raquel, se alargue el plazo, corres mayor peligro' ll. 706-7), over what he had previously seen as the 'justa pretensión' (l. 390) of his people. Once again, he gives as his reason the impact of supernatural forces beyond his own control: 'El cielo' (l. 604), 'mi desventura' (l. 613). By the end of the act, he reveals the extent to which he has lost all sense of self, of who he is, as he questions his nobles, '¿Soy vuestro Rey? [...] ¿Sois mis Vasallos?' ll. 657-8 and establishes Raquel as ruler in his place, before abandoning the scene entirely. The task of Kingship has defeated him: perhaps it is a basic act of survival that leads him to this extreme position since the alternatives as he sees them are between the end of his existence through an inability to live without Raquel or the end of his identity as King through the substitution of Raquel. These are the (in)actions of a man who is failing to take responsibility and espouse the ideals of masculine and kingly behavior. He is described by Hernán García as suffering from 'ciegos desvaríos' (l. 762) and, most significantly in terms of plot resolution, from the effects of the 'encanto' (l. 783) of 'una beldad tirana' (l. 775). This is a position of abandonment of self-identity to a woman set up to represent an intrusive other. It offers the nobles the justification for extreme actions in attempting to restore Alfonso to his right mind since, as Hernán stated right at the beginning of the play, like the basilisk, Raquel 'adormeció el sentido [de Alfonso] con su vista' (l. 47). It leads to what appears to be a temporary alignment between Hernán García and Álvaro Fáñez in the need for action to restore Alfonso's identity as King by breaking the 'encanto' (l. 783) through an act of daring, 'la mayor lealtad en la osadía' (l. 793). As we shall see in the next act, however, Álvaro Fáñez's idea that Raquel should be killed, while apparently full of Kantian resolve and courage, lacks the necessary tempering of reason and moral rectitude with which Hernán García seeks to act.

It is Hernán then who is confirmed in the final *jornada* as the model of the true modern man, one who understands the significance of his actions to the identities he creates and to the representations he gives of himself in the present and those he leaves to the future. Echoing the words of Descartes in article 153 of *The Passions of the Soul*, his self-esteem is grounded in an understanding that he has free will and that his present and future identity



depend on him using it for good.<sup>7</sup> This ethical dimension is foregrounded as he opposes Álgar Fández's stance, '¿De Españoles se creará acción de tanto oprobio llena?' (ll. 49-50); 'Y quien intenta que un delito castigue otro delito, ¿obra con equidad y con prudencia? No oscurezcaís así vuestras hazañas; confiésoos la razón de vuestras quejas' (ll. 74-8). Resolute in the position he has held from the beginning of the play, Hernán focuses on the relationship between morally-upright actions and identity: '¿Será gloriosa empresa de un Castellano acero, cuyos filos fueron horror de huestes Agarenas, teñirse con la sangre desdichada de una infeliz mujer? ¿Será proeza?' (ll. 92-6). His active attempts to avoid Raquel's death in spite of her misguided persecution of him in the mistaken belief that he is encouraging sedition, contrast with Garcerán Manrique's position of inaction and reliance on the past glories of his ancestors, 'Los Laras de leales siempre fueron espejo' (ll. 231-2), which later become active incitement of Raquel to kill Hernán through Garcerán's anger at Hernán's reprimand of him.

When Alfonso makes his penultimate entrance with Raquel, we can see him still as a man who is failing to take responsibility and who has abandoned both his personal identity and sense of self, in the form of his freewill, to his love for her: '¿No reñas como siempre en mi albedrío?' (l. 267) and his identity as King through his neglect of duties in handing over control to her and now, in this final act, prioritizing the 'placer ordinario de la caza' (l. 279) over remaining in the *alcázar* to support her. Hernán on the other hand does not swerve from the path of courage and responsibility as he seeks to remind the furious noblemen of the repercussions of their actions on future generations: 'Reportaos, Castellanos: no desdore vuestra fama y renombre acción tan fea' (ll. 373-4). He acts to defend Raquel however she is unable to recognize his loyalty and rushes off the stage, leaving Hernán alone to affirm his domination of himself, his sense of responsibility and his undoubted courage as he faces up to the dangerous task ahead of him, casting aside notions of fate with a clear focus on his own action: '¡Válgame Dios, cómo permite el cielo que los malos se cieguen, cuando intenta castigar sus delitos y maldades! ¿Pero qué podré hacer? Ya la violencia penetra hasta este sitio.' (ll. 487-91).

Hernán's defense first of Raquel and then of Rubén, two people who, as his own words have made abundantly clear throughout the play, represent everything that he considers to be bad in the world, the sum of his social,

---

<sup>7</sup> '[T]here is nothing that truly pertains to [man] but this free disposition of his will, and that there is no reason why he should be praised or blamed unless it is because he uses it well or ill' (401).

gender and religious prejudices, paradoxically offers the clearest exemplification in the play of the behavior of the enlightened man, one who, in reflection of Kant's own words, knows his own worth, thinks for himself and faces up with courage and resolve to his responsibilities. In Foucauldian terms, the way that he relates to his contemporary reality reveals his modernity as he makes the voluntary and personally difficult choice to act in ways that show a clear sense of his belonging to his time and yet also reveal his understanding of the significance of this time in terms of the mark it leaves for the future. Álar Fández, on the other hand, shows what happens when reason is blinded by emotions and action undertaken without a moral context; he takes the cowardly way out, first of forcing Rubén to carry out the actual action of murdering Raquel and then fleeing the scene. Raquel's final words are to recognize the significance and moral worth of Hernán García's actions, yet while they convince Alfonso of Hernán's loyalty, they are still insufficient to bring about a change in his behavior as, in a blind rage, he takes revenge upon Rubén, continues to blame misfortune for his situation – '¡Ay infeliz de mí!' (l. 701); 'Mas al cielo protesto' (l. 747) – and threatens the traitorous nobles with death. Hernán's final action of physical restraint and verbal call to moral behavior – '*deteniéndole* [...] "reprimid vuestros enojos; a la justicia remitid la queja"' (l. 769-70) – at last brings Alfonso to self-awareness of his identity as King and as a man, able both to recognize and act with reason and to take responsibility for his actions within an ethical framework. In Kantian terms we see him taking the active decision to bring about his own 'emergence from his self-imposed immaturity' choosing as his first act of morally-responsible Kingship the bestowing of a pardon on his vassals for their role in causing the death of Raquel (ll. 772-80):

Tienes razón, [...]  
 Yo tu muerte he causado, Raquel mía;  
 mi ceguedad te mata; [...]  
 lloraré yo mi culpa y tu tragedia.  
 Yo os perdono, Vasallos, el agravio:  
 alzádel suelo, alzádel.

In reading Huerta's play as a work very much reflective of its time not only in political and ideological terms but also in intellectual terms, it is revealing to make a comparison with perhaps the best known other version

of this legend in Spanish literature, Lope de Vega's *Las paces de los reyes* (1617).<sup>8</sup> In Lope's play, the action starts with the King still a child and, as McCrary writes, '[t]he action which the plot of *Las paces* dramatizes [...] is essentially an extended rite of passage' (3) charting the King's development into a responsible adult ruler. It is an angel who triggers Lope's King's rebirth, founded on a recognition of his place in the divinely-ordained hierarchical universe, which McCrary describes as 'his transit from *niño-rey* and *rey-niño* into mature sovereignty bring[ing] with it the characteristic enlightenment of the anointed: "Es que yo la [luz] voy tomando, / y de tinieblas saliendo" (ll. 2644-45)' (8). It is a play that reflects and reinforces the ideology of its Baroque origins, whereby Alfonso comes to understand his role and place within a pre-established, external level of order. In a similar but also fundamentally different way, Huerta's version dramatises Alfonso's coming to maturity in Kantian terms: we witness the personal existential, rational and moral development of Alfonso to a point where he is finally able to cast off 'the shackles of a permanent immaturity', his enlightenment expressed in terms of the acceptance of responsibility, and brought about by an exemplary modern man in the form of Hernán García. Hernán is the exemplary character, presented consistently as a responsible man of action, secure in the performance of his own identity and in the recognition that it is constantly created through actions, aware of his own self-worth and of the responsibilities that go with his gender and social position. In contrast to the Baroque individual, the Kantian modern man creates his own order 'with assurance and free from outside direction' ('What is Enlightenment?', 123); as Taylor notes in this context, '[t]he hegemony of reason is defined no longer as that of the dominant vision but rather in terms of a directing agency subordinating a functional domain' and man is the directing 'human agent [...] able to remake himself by methodical and disciplined action' (149 and 159).

Read through the lenses of Kant's and Foucault's responses to the question, 'What is Enlightenment?', Huerta's *Raquel* reveals itself to be a quintessentially Enlightenment play in terms of its 'attitude of modernity'. It is one that reveals an acute awareness of the significance of the time at which it was written, through its use of the medieval past in order to engage with both the politics, and the new ontological and ethical landscape of the present, and to imagine and seek to direct how we might act in the future.

---

<sup>8</sup> See James A. Castañeda, *A Critical Edition of Lope de Vega's 'Las paces de los reyes y judía de Toledo'*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1962). References are given as line numbers from this edition of the play.

Kant's careful distinction about not living in 'an *enlightened age*' but in 'an *age of enlightenment*', is helpful in understanding the complexities of Hernán's character; while we condemn his undeniably unenlightened, prejudiced and hate-filled views about women and Jewish people, we should also recognize that he displays throughout the play a consistent understanding of the importance of action guided by reason, courage and resolve that reveal a Foucauldian 'attitude of modernity', and he has lived up to the task of bringing his monarch to that same position. That such a modern way of thinking and behaving should lie side by side with some loathsome prejudices about others is reflective of the play's time of composition. They can be understood through thinking about the Enlightenment as a time when new forms of self-aware intellectual activity, that we understand as essentially modern, take place, yet where the beliefs and socio-political positions of these individuals may well be far from enlightened in terms of modern expectations of equality and social justice. It is also perhaps reflective of the complex character of its author Vicente García de la Huerta. He was an individual whose aristocratic and nationalistic leanings have led him to be portrayed more often as an anti-enlightenment traditionalist, even as an opponent of Enlightenment thinking. Through this analysis of his play *Raquel*, we can see that being enlightened and being modern are complex and multifaceted concepts and that differentiating 'between "philosophical" and "political" interpretations of the Enlightenment' (Schmidt, "Misunderstanding the Question" 44) can help us to understand the work of a complex man very much engaged with the hopes, tensions and contradictions of eighteenth-century Spain.

#### WORKS CITED

- Andioc, René. "La *Raquel* de Huerta y el antiabsolutismo." In *Teatro y sociedad en el Madrid del siglo XVIII*. Madrid: Castalia, 1976. 259-344.
- Astigarraga, Jesús. *The Spanish Enlightenment Revisited*. Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2015.
- Benwell, Bethan, and Elizabeth Stokoe. *Discourse and Identity*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2006.
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble*. New York: Routledge, 1990.
- Cassirer, Ernst. *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1951.

- Castañeda, James A. *A Critical Edition of Lope de Vega's 'Las paces de los reyes y judía de Toledo'*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1962.
- Deacon, Philip. "García de la Huerta, *Raquel* y el motín de Madrid de 1766." *Boletín de la Real Academia Española* 56 (1976): 369-87.
- Descartes, René. *The Passions of the Soul*, 1649. In *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*. Trans. Elizabeth S. Haldane and G. R. T. Ross. Vol. I. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1978. 329-427.
- Foucault, Michel. "What is Enlightenment?" In *The Foucault Reader*. Ed. P. Rabinow. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991. 32-50.
- García de la Huerta, Vicente. *Raquel*. Ed. René Andioc. Madrid: Castalia, 1970.
- Hall, Stuart. "Introduction: Who Needs 'Identity'?" In *Questions of Cultural Identity*. Eds Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay. London: Sage, 1996. 1-17.
- . "The Work of Representation." In *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. Ed. Stuart Hall. London: Sage, 1997. 13-74.
- Israel, Jonathan I. *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man, 1670-1752*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006.
- Kant, Immanuel. "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?" In *Perceptual Peace and Other Essays*. Trans. Ted Humphrey. Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett, 1983. 41-48.
- Lifshey, Adam. "'Esa beldad muerta': la judía arquetípica en la *Raquel* de Vicente García de la Huerta." *ALEPH* 11 (1996): 66-84.
- Martí-López, Elisa. *Borrowed Words*. Cranbury; London; Mississauga: Associated University Presses, 2002.
- McCrary, William C. "Plot, Action, and Imitation: The Art of Lope's *Las paces de los reyes*." *Hispanófila* 48 (1973): 1-17.
- Melehy, Hassan. *Writing Cogito: Montaigne, Descartes, and the institution of the modern subject*. Albany: State U of New York P, 1997.

- Menéndez Pidal, Ramón, ed. *Primera crónica general*. Madrid: Gredos, 1955.
- Osborne, Peter. "Gender as Performance: An Interview with Judith Butler." *Radical Philosophy* 67 (Summer 1994): 32-39.
- Ríos Carratalá, Juan A. *Vicente García de la Huerta (1734-1787)*. Badajoz: Diputación Provincial de Badajoz, 1987.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Vicente García de la Huerta*. Alicante: Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes, n.d. At [http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/portales/vicente\\_garcia\\_de\\_la\\_huerta/autor\\_biografia/](http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/portales/vicente_garcia_de_la_huerta/autor_biografia/) Accessed 1 November 2017.
- Rutz, Wolfgang. "Suicidal Behaviour: Comments, Advancements, Challenges. A European Perspective." *World Psychiatry* 3.3 (October 2004): 161-162.
- Schmidt, James. "Misunderstanding the Question: 'What is Enlightenment?': Venturi, Habermas, and Foucault." *History of European Ideas* 37.1 (2011): 43-52.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "On Foucault's Review of Cassirer's *Philosophy of the Enlightenment*." Persistent Enlightenment blog. Entry for 2 July 2013. At <https://persistentenlightenment.com/2013/07/02/foucaultcassirer/> Accessed 1 November 2017.
- Siegel, Jerrold. *The Idea of the Self*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005.
- Taylor, Charles. *Sources of the Self*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989.
- Wood, Allen W. "What is Kantian Ethics?" In Immanuel Kant. *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*. Ed. and trans. Allen W. Wood. New Haven and London: Yale UP, 2002. 157-181.
- Yarbro-Bejerano, Yvonne. *Feminism and the Honor Plays of Lope de Vega*. West Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue UP, 1994.

